

William Wordsworth



William Wordsworth was born on April 7, 1770 in the Lake District of Cumberland, England.

Wordsworth learned the hardships of life when his mother died in 1778 followed by his father in 1783. William and his siblings were sent to live with different relatives all over England. After studying at University he took a summer-long backpacking adventure through Switzerland, Italy and France. While in France, he met Annette Vallon and fell passionately in love with her. They became lovers, and she bore William a daughter, Ann Caroline. They never married, possibly because Annette was a conservative Catholic and William a liberal Protestant.

In France, he witnessed the beginning of the French Revolution. He agreed with many of the rebels and accepted many of their philosophies. Wordsworth became a great poetic spokesman for the common man. The backpacking trip inspired two main themes that he used often in his writings: awareness of poverty and a love of the beauty of nature.

On his return to England, friends arranged for money to allow him to concentrate on his writing. He lived with his sister Dorothy, to whom he was intimately attached. At this time Wordsworth met Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who became a great friend. Coleridge had a rebellious spirit and believed in the spirit of the Revolution and freethinking.

Coleridge introduced Wordsworth to philosopher David Hartley, whose theories would have a profound effect on his poetry. Hartley's philosophy was that an unbreakable bond exists between nature and man.

Coleridge and Wordsworth published the *Lyrical Ballads in 1799*. The work abruptly broke with the neoclassical tradition and is notable for its attempt to use ordinary language in a poetic fashion. Wordsworth wished to depict the common man, using the common language of man. Themes of the poems are humanitarianism, liberalism, and the love of nature.

Wordsworth wrote, "**Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility.**" He believed it is **feeling** that "gives importance to the action and the situation." Also, he did not believe in having to follow set rules on the "correct" forms of poetry. Some of his poetry is "loose" and appears unstructured while other pieces follow traditional verse forms.

Wordsworth spent the winter of 1798-99 with his Dorothy and Coleridge in Germany, where Wordsworth wrote the enigmatic 'Lucy' poems. Dorothy's thoughts and writings were an important source of stimulation for both Coleridge and Wordsworth. Coleridge saw the trio as "three persons with one soul".

In 1802 Wordsworth received money owed to his father, and he was financially secure enough to marry Mary Hutchinson, an old childhood friend. Mary, William, and his sister Dorothy lived together in the Lake District village of Grasmere.

Wordsworth's happy home life turned to tragedy when two of his five children died within a year. Shortly thereafter Wordsworth took a position as a tax collector, which brought him enough money to continue writing. Although his poems were not well received by literary critics, they were gaining a wide popular readership and Wordsworth eventually became Poet Laureate.

He died on April 23, 1850, and a monument was erected in his honor in Westminster Abbey.

Wordsworth is recognized for bringing revolutionary ideas and change to poetry. His poetry discusses anything and everything that is common to man but ultimately presents images of the natural world joined with the divine spirit.

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/>

The French Revolution

http://www.everypoet.com/archive/poetry/William_Wordsworth/william_wordsworth_contents.htm

Complete works of Wordsworth